

THE PLACE OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN STATE POLICIES: EXAMPLE OF THE THRACE REGION

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Abstract

Cooperatives are organizations which become more powerful especially with the incentives provided by the states in terms of bringing individuals together and directing them to more fruitful production methods and have a significant role in sustainable development today. Among these autonomous structures, especially agricultural cooperatives are one of the prominent actors included by states in their economic, social and political policies. Today, the relationship between the states and agricultural cooperatives is significant not only due to economic concerns but also in terms of providing a stable organizational structure to future generations. In this respect, having knowledge about the structure of agricultural cooperatives in the past and following the development of these structures is a priority to understand the basis of the relationship among the state, agricultural cooperatives and farmers engaged in agricultural production. Secondly, the role assigned to agricultural cooperatives through legal incentives and supports by the state in its actual agricultural policies as well as the state of agricultural cooperatives and farmers enable us to understand the current structural level of these organizations. Accordingly, examining the relationship between the farmers engaged in agricultural production in Thrace region with the agricultural cooperatives and links between the latter and the state will provide us with a regional example to analysis and interpret this process.

It is aimed by this study to examine reflections of the agricultural cooperatives and farmers in state policies based on the outputs of the project titled “Determining the Level of Knowledge of the Farmers in Thrace Region for the Cooperative System and Raising Awareness” conducted to understand the relations between the agricultural cooperatives in Thrace Region and farmers of the same region.

Keywords: Agricultural cooperative, agricultural producer, state policy

JEL Codes: H00, Q00, Q13

1. INTRODUCTION

The countries, while determining their sustainable development strategies, considers cooperatives as main actors at both national and local level. Moreover, the cooperatives are organizations included in the state policies in order to improve their managerial and organizational capabilities and thus supported in many countries. In addition, relations established by the farmers and supreme organizations of the state indicate that they assume the role of a bridge to satisfy economic needs of the farmers dealing with agriculture and remedy their agricultural concerns. Other than the said aspects of the cooperatives, the farmers’ opinions on cooperatives and their level of interpretation of their relations with the cooperative and state are significant in terms of reflecting status of the cooperatives at national level. The results of examination of the incentives and supports provided by the state for the cooperatives as organizations in terms of the relations among the state, cooperatives and farmers, local and national activities of the cooperatives, supreme public organizations governing the cooperative system, laws on cooperatives, level of awareness of the farmers and their level of accesses to the means provided will both reflect the current state of the agricultural cooperatives and contribute in enhancement of the relations among the state, cooperatives and farmers.

Thus, examination of the role assigned to the cooperatives in state policies and approach of the farmers to the relation between state and cooperatives has been emphasized in this article. Within the scope of the research project forming basis for this article, the farmers in Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ and İstanbul (districts of Çatalca and Silivri) were surveyed and their knowledge and opinions on the

agricultural cooperatives were identified. Those following has been recommended as a result of this study: organizational structures of the cooperatives and public bodies should be strengthened in addition to the farmers and cooperatives; farmers should take advantage of state incentives through cooperatives, access to financial means, and establish cooperation; relations between the cooperatives and the state should be strengthened and farmers should be included more in the state policies through participation of cooperatives.

The article is composed of six parts and relevant sub-headings. The first part of *theoretical framework* includes the place of research, Turkey and agricultural cooperatives, brief history of agricultural cooperatives in Turkey, activities of the agricultural cooperatives in Turkey, relations between the state and agricultural cooperatives in Turkey, public bodies concerning the agricultural cooperatives, laws enacted for the agricultural cooperatives and relevant legislative proposals and state supports and incentives provided for the agricultural cooperatives. On the other hand, the parts in which the findings of the research have been presented and analysed were created in the light of the data obtained within the scope of scientific research project. And general assessments have been made and recommendations have been provided in the conclusion part.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, the place, activities and public role of the agricultural cooperatives in Turkey have been examined based on the data obtained from the scientific research project. Thus, the place of research, laws and supports concerning the agricultural cooperatives and a brief history of the agricultural cooperatives have been discussed.

2.1. Place of Research

The study was conducted in Thrace Region of Turkey. Thrace region covered by this study and located in Turkey in addition to two other countries (See Map 1) forms the north-western section of the country. It has an approximate surface area of 25,000km² and constitutes 3% of total surface area of Turkey. The region is surrounded by sea eastward, northward and southward and neighbours on Bulgaria and Greece. In terms of geographical structures, it is surrounded by Istranca (Yıldız) mountains lie northwestward-southeastward, Ganos (Işık) mountains lie eastward-westward and Koru mountains forming the westward extension of the said mountains. There are means of irrigation in the central part of the region and it also hosts Ergene River and tributaries of Evros River forming the Turkish border with Bulgaria and Greece (Asan & Yarcı, 1993: 26).

In Turkey, what is indicated by the Thrace Region is Eastern Thrace. Therefore, the provinces of Tekirdağ, Kırklareli and Edirne including all of their districts and Silivri and Çatalca districts of İstanbul which are all located in the region were included in the study.

Thrace has a significant agricultural potential and a fruitful region geographically. The main economic activity in the provinces of Tekirdağ, Kırklareli and Tekirdağ is agriculture; 75% and 25% of the agricultural output originate from plant growing and livestock respectively and thus the region is highly developed in terms of organization (Semerci, 2006: 63). As indicated by Semerci, “*Chambers of commerce, agricultural credit cooperatives and agricultural oil seed sales cooperatives are the prominent entities in terms of agricultural organization*” (Semerci, 2006: 67).

Ratio of agricultural land is generally higher in Thrace compared to other regions of Turkey. Thanks to factors such as the relatively low altitude of the region, plain structure of the land and favourable geographical conditions, 1/3 of the arable soil of Turkey is located in the region and thus output per unit area is considerably higher therein (Güngör, 2007: 12).

Map 1. Thrace Region of Turkey (Google Maps, 2019)



2.2. Turkey and Agricultural Cooperatives

The producers in Turkey established various agricultural cooperatives for both their professional and economic organizing efforts. In this context, the cooperatives are significant organizations contributing in national economy in addition to the benefits provided by them for their shareholders. If we classify the agricultural organization models in Turkey as economic organization, organization for creating policies and organizations of volunteers, the cooperatives represent the economic branch, producer unions represent the policy, directing and lobbying branch and the Chambers of Agriculture assume the professional branch function establishing a bridge between the government and farmers. All of these branches constitute integrity (Özdemir vd., 2011: 102, 109).

According to Özdemir, “the share of the cooperatives in processing of agricultural products in Turkey is in between 1% and 10%. However, this rate varies by 30% to 100% in EU countries. The agricultural product markets of Turkey are generally dominated by the intermediaries. Accordingly, the products change hand 6-7 times and herbal products change hand 4-5 times from the producer to the end user. However, it does not exceed 2-3 in developed countries and the producer associations generally assume the role of intermediary” (Özdemir et al., 2011: 109). The cooperatives are significant organizations for rural areas. Especially considering that the main objective of the producer organization is to improve standards and quality of living of the farmers and their families, the requirement of improving productivity and strengthening the place of the producers in the market emerges. In this regard, the potential of the cooperatives is significant. Cooperatives draw interests as organizations which produce goods and generate employment in addition to public and provide sector and provide means of cooperation with international organizations. Therefore, it is significant to ensure an increase in number of researches on the cooperatives, examine the subject in an integrated manner with the national economy, determine the needs and address the measures required to be taken in addition to general issues such as financing, supreme organization, training and research, legislation and supervision in order to strengthen the cooperative system in Turkey.

2.2.1. A Brief History of Agricultural Cooperatives in Turkey

As Turkey was located on an ancient region, various agricultural activities have been performed throughout the history. The land was owned by the state under Seljuk and Ottoman rule but its right of use was assigned to individuals. Considering the status of land, agricultural activities and policies of Ottomans, creation of a military force, collection of taxes and satisfaction of food needs of urban areas

were linked with agriculture (Yavuz & Çağlayan, 2005: 1). However, agricultural activities have been maintained to be included in the state policies. According to Yavuz, “*The first significant agricultural policies of the Republican Era were abolishment of tithes in 1925 and recognition of land ownership of the farmers by adoption of the Civil Law in 1926. These two policies were considered to be for the benefit of the farmers at the beginning*” (Yavuz, 2005: 46). By transition to the planned era, agricultural production inputs were stated to be supported.

It is observed while analysing the history of cooperative that the incentives provided by the states have played a significant role. Thanks to these incentives, number and scale of the cooperatives has increased. The cooperative system is not a root-grass movement in Turkey but was imposed from the top, in other words under leadership of the state (Bilgin & Tanıyıcı, 2008: 136).

One can see cooperative-like organizations in the period prior to establishment of the republic in Turkey. In this regard, the cooperative system manifested itself in the last years of Anatolian Seljuks in 13th century and “*Ahi Community*” (Turkish/Islamic guild) was an example of such organization. The tradesman organizations operating under the title of “*Ahi order*” till 18th century and “*trade monopoly and guild*” till the first years of 20th displayed a similar structure but they were abolished by a law enacted in 1913 and replaced by trade associations. “*Imece*” (collective work in a village or rural area) is also a type of cooperation similar to cooperatives performed in the villages since time immemorial. By this method, the works were performed collectively in various villages. The first cooperatives in Turkey were established in Turkey in 19th century under Ottoman rule. In parallel with the cooperatives disseminated globally from the Europe, credit cooperative system was stated to be implemented under Ottoman Rule. First cooperative initiate of the Ottomans is the “*National Fund*” established by Mithat Pasha in 1863. In 1900’s, conscious and more active cooperative efforts were observed in the Aegean Region. By establishment of the republic, the cooperative system was prioritized to enhance the productivity in agriculture and remedy economic griefs of the farmers. Accordingly, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic, made efforts for the cooperative system and the “*Agricultural Unions Law*” was enacted in 1929. It was aimed to satisfy the needs of agricultural credit and sales cooperatives from a single source by this law. And in 1929, Agricultural Credit Cooperatives Law was enacted. The state was assigned tasks and powers to solve the problems of rural areas by the Law No. 2834 on Agricultural Sales Cooperatives and Unions and Law No. 2836 on Agricultural Credit Cooperatives enacted in 1935. Later, the law no. 2836 was replaced with the law no. 1581 on Agricultural Credit Cooperatives AND Unions. This law aimed to release the agricultural credit cooperatives of management and control of Ziraat Bankası, a state-owned bank. And it instead paved the way for independent organization and supreme organizations such as regional and central unions. Agricultural development cooperatives were started to be established in 1969. Central union of Village Cooperatives was established in 1971, it was interrupted in 1980 and agricultural development cooperatives of 7 provinces came together and founded this union again in 1999 (Saka, 1974; Bilgin & Tanıyıcı, 2008; Kocabaş, 2010; Turkish Ministry of Trade, 2019). In 2000’s, the cooperatives maintained their development path thanks to their connections with the state, new shareholders and autonomous structures.

2.2.2. Activities of Agricultural Cooperatives in Turkey

In the Ottoman era, agriculture was a very significant field of activity. This trend was maintained in the first years of the Republican era. Agriculture made up a significant portion of GDP and was the main source of employment and a great portion of the population lived in rural areas in the first years of the republic. Therefore, agricultural issues had an important place to determine economic and social policies. This process also effected development of agricultural cooperatives and increase in their activities. Especially cooperatives paved the way for a conscious organization by enhancing the solidarity and cooperation in agriculture and they assumed significant roles for supplying the agricultural inputs, use of these inputs in a rational and effective manner, marketing agricultural products and establishing relation between the farmers and financiers (Turkish Ministry of Customs and Trade, 2017:30). It is possible to classify agricultural cooperatives as agricultural purchasing cooperatives, agricultural credit cooperatives, agricultural insurance cooperatives, agricultural sales cooperatives, agricultural processing cooperatives, land use cooperatives, agricultural service

cooperatives, rural development cooperatives and land reform cooperatives (Mülayim, 1995: 9-12) or as “*beet growers cooperatives, agricultural credit cooperatives, agricultural development cooperatives, irrigation cooperatives, aquaculture cooperatives within the field of activity of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock as well as agricultural sales cooperatives and raw vegetable and fruit marketing cooperatives that are both agricultural and commercial organizations supervised by the Ministry of Customs and Trade*” within the framework of the Cooperatives Law No. 1163. The most common form of agricultural cooperatives is agricultural development cooperatives (Cooperative System Law, 1969; Turkish Ministry of Customs and Trade, 2017).

2.3. Relations of the State and Agricultural Cooperatives in Turkey

Economic support, training and incentives are the major elements of the relations between both the farmers and state and agricultural cooperatives and state. These relations generally followed a path to those at national level. The laws and regulations directly on agriculture and cooperative form the basis for the relations among the farmers, cooperatives and the state in addition to the relations between province and district directorates of agriculture, chambers of agriculture, municipality, district governor’s office and governor’s office as well as province and district organizations of political parties. Moreover, the relevant ministries have been authorized by laws to guide and inspect the cooperatives and assist them in their activities in the supreme structures of the state.

2.3.1. Public Departments dealing with Agricultural Cooperative

Agricultural organization is a matter that should be examined with all dimensions and covers not only economic but also professional organization of the farmers. By a general classification, form of organization in Turkish agriculture is classified as public organization and farmers’ organization. For the public organization, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Trade are the ministries directly engaged with the farmers and authorized for cooperatives by laws. The ministries render service by the presidencies and general directorates in the capital and province and district directorates in the provinces and relevant and associated organizations of the ministry form the other organs of the organization. On the other hand, in terms of farmer organization, chambers of agriculture, farmer unions and associations form the professional stage of this organization and agricultural cooperatives, unions for providing services for villages, irrigation cooperatives, farming unions and producer unions form the economic leg. (Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Turkish Ministry of Trade; Law on Cooperatives, 1969; Yercan, 2007).

2.3.2. Laws Enacted and Legislative Proposals on Agricultural Cooperatives

The cooperatives are established in line with general or special provisions in Turkey. Till 1969, the general provisions were included in the Turkish Trade Code. The Cooperatives Law No. 1163 enacted in that year replaced this practise. The special laws enacted for agricultural cooperatives before this date were Agricultural Credit Cooperatives Law of 1929, Agricultural Sales Cooperatives and Unions Law No. 2834 of 1935 and Agricultural Credit Cooperatives Law No. 2836 of 1935. In addition to them, certain provisions on cooperatives were also included in the constitution. Article 51 of the Constitution of 1961 states that “*the state takes measures to strengthen the cooperative system*” and Article 171 of the Constitution of 1982 states that “*the state takes measures to strengthen the cooperative system by considering the benefits of national economy and primarily aiming to increase production and protect the consumers*”. Following enactment of the cooperatives law in 1969, the laws on cooperatives and especially agricultural cooperatives continued to be a topic of conversation. Some of those laws are as following: Agricultural Tobacco Sales Cooperatives and Regional Unions and General Union of Turkish Agricultural Tobacco Sales Cooperatives Law No. 1196 of 1969, Agricultural Credit Cooperatives and Unions Law No. 1581 of 1972, Land and Agriculture Reform Law No. 1757 of 1973, Law No. 3186 on Amendment and Approval of the Decree Law regarding Establishment of Agricultural Sales Cooperatives and Unions of 1985, Law No. 4572 on Agricultural Sales Cooperatives and Unions of 2000, Law No. 4876 on Non-Performing Loans Granted by Republic of Turkey Ziraat Bankası A.İ. and Agricultural Credit Cooperatives of 2003, Law No. 5530 on Amendment and Approval of the Decree Law No. 553 on Amendment of Agricultural Credit Cooperatives and Unions Law of 2005, the Law No. 5661 on Expiration of Surety arising from

Collective Village Funds / Group Credits granted by Republic of Turkey Ziraat Bankası Anonim Şirketi and Agricultural Credit Cooperatives (Turkish Constitution of 1961, 1961; Turkish Constitution, 1982; Grand National Assembly of Turkey; Mülayim, 1995).

In addition to the laws enacted for cooperative and especially agricultural cooperatives and regulating their functioning, legislative proposals are also significant to observe the role assigned to agriculture and agricultural cooperatives in public sphere and state policies. 17 legislative proposals concerning cooperatives have been submitted since 20th Legislative Year of Turkish Republic (1995). Number of those only regarding agriculture is 11. 5 of them became a law and 6 of them became obsolete and 6 proposals were transferred to new legislative period. There has been a mobilization on public policies regarding the cooperative system since 2020. Number of legislative proposals regarding cooperatives has been 41 as of 27th Legislative Year (2020). Number of those specially regarding agriculture is 18 (Grand National Assembly of Turkey, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tasari_teklif_sd.sorgu_baslangic, accessed on 03.08.2020).

2.3.3. *State Supports and Incentives for Agricultural Cooperatives*

Economic dimension of the cooperatives that exceeds their organization, solidarity and cooperation dimensions forces the state deal with cooperatives in the relations between the state and cooperatives. Similarly, cooperatives are first and foremost economic organizations. Moreover, the cooperative system forms a significant instrument to adapt to democratic life and economic order. Considering the relation between the state and cooperatives, there are three methods, namely ‘*free system*’ in which there is no relation between the state and cooperatives, mutual ‘*assistance system*’ in which the state assists in cooperatives for certain issues regarding foundation and functioning, ‘*tutelage system*’ in which the state takes responsibilities in management of the cooperatives in addition to enacting laws and ‘*statism system*’ in which cooperatives are among the bodies of the state according to Mülayim (Mülayim, 1995: 83-87). These systems are also significant to understand the support provided for cooperatives by the state while analysing the relation between the cooperatives and state.

Agricultural cooperatives represent the most common form of producers’ organizations which are one of the most significant instruments for rural and economic development. According to Karaönder and Tan, “*Agricultural organizations are formations that will directly affect the income level of the farmers as they deal with significant agricultural activities such as livestock, greenhouse cultivation, storage, marketing, shipping and supplying inputs for the farmers.*” (Karaönder & Tan, 2013: 89). On the other hand, the agricultural cooperatives, as significant instruments to create socioeconomic policies, have been dealt as entities to be supported in all agricultural policies implemented in Turkey as they represent effective and functioning organization model, gather farmers under a single roof and include them in the market and protect their rights. Here are some examples to these supports: Development Plans of the Republican Era, Agricultural Reform Implementation Project (ARIP) implemented in 2001, the “*Agricultural Strategy*” no. 2004/92 on 30/11/2004 that provides the framework for agricultural policies and explains the strategies for agricultural policies for a period of five years as well as the “*Law on Agriculture*” no. 5488 on 18/04/2006, Rural Development Element (IPARD) aka Rural Development Programme submitted “*as an instrument to contribute in sustainable modernization of agricultural sector and found and support farmer groups for them to achieve the development targets*” and “*Turkish Strategy and Action Plan for Cooperative System 2012-2016*” issued by participation of various stakeholders under leadership of General Directorate of Cooperatives of Ministry of Customs and Trade and aiming to prove solutions arising from the legislation” (Tan & Karaönder, 2013: 89-92).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE & QUESTION

The objective of this research is to measure the level of knowledge of farmers residing in Thrace Region regarding the cooperative system, identify favourable and unfavourable perceptions on the cooperative system, reveal the relations between the farmers and cooperatives and analyse the results. Thus, it is aimed to obtain data to enhance level of knowledge of the farmers regarding the cooperative system and raise awareness by utilizing this data. In addition, another objective of this article is to

assess approach of both farmers and cooperative shareholders to the actual policies of the state and its reflections in daily life through the example of Thrace Region.

The question of the research is to measure the level of the level of knowledge of farmers residing in Thrace Region regarding the cooperative system. Thus, the question forming the main concern of this article is examining awareness level of the farmers regarding the relations between the cooperatives and state and assist in raising awareness in state policies.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, survey research method was used as the data collection method. By this method, the farmers engaged in agricultural production in the provinces of Edirne, Kırklareli and Tekirdağ in Thrace Region and Silivri and Çatalca districts of İstanbul in the same region were included in the study and accordingly the population of the study is composed of the farmers in Thrace. In this context, the sample was calculated to be 215 persons for a confidence level of 0.05 and error margin of 5% (See Table I).

Table 1. Sample Size

F	Parameters	x
p	Acceptance rate of the case under consideration	0,500
q	Rejection rate of the case under consideration	0,500
d	Accepted sampling error	0,050
t	T value according to the level of significance	1,960
N	Research population	45000
n	Sample	215

8.4% of the survey participants are females while the remaining (91.6%) participants are males. 48.8% of them are at the ages of 45-59 and 24.2% of them are 60 years old and above. In terms of educational background, 47.9%, 18.6% and 33.5% of the farmers are primary school graduates, secondary school graduates, associate/bachelor's degree holders respectively. In terms of income level, 46%, 21.4%, 12.1%, 10.2% and 5.6% of the participants have a monthly household income of equal to and lower than 5000 TRY, 5001-10000 TRY, 10001-25000 TRY, 25001-40000 TRY and 40001 TRY and more respectively. In addition, 66% of the participants are members of an agricultural cooperative.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS and their ANALYSIS

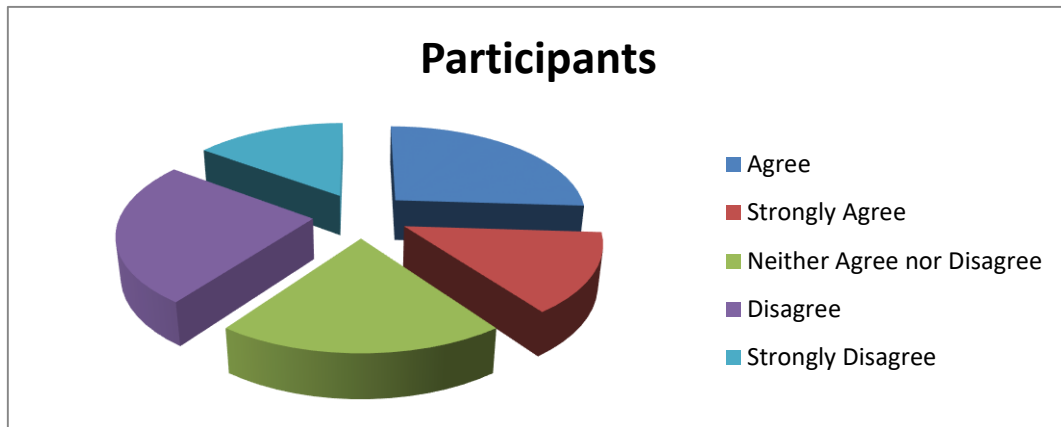
5.1. Case of Thrace Region in terms of the Relation between State Policies and Agricultural Cooperatives.

Likert scale was used in the research. The questions taken basis for the subject matter of the articles are as following:

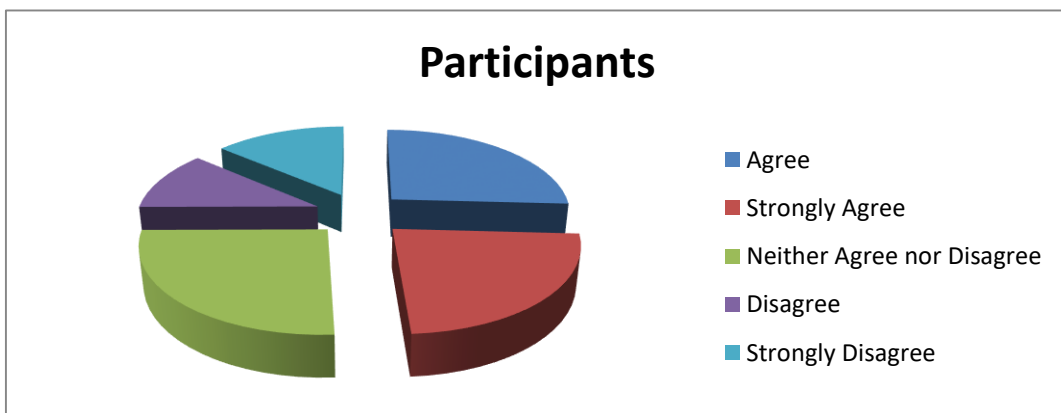
- I. I find support of the state for agricultural production sufficient.
- II. Support of the state for the farmers is insufficient.
- III. I have knowledge about the cooperative concept.
- IV. I have knowledge about cooperative types.

- V. I have knowledge about supreme unions of cooperatives.
- VI. I have knowledge about the organizations supervising cooperatives in Turkey.
- VII. Activities of the cooperatives in Turkey bear political motives.
- VIII. The cooperatives in Turkey provides easiness for access to financial (monetary) resources.
- IX. Cooperatives are necessary for both its shareholders and the country.

Graph 1. Answers to the 1st Question

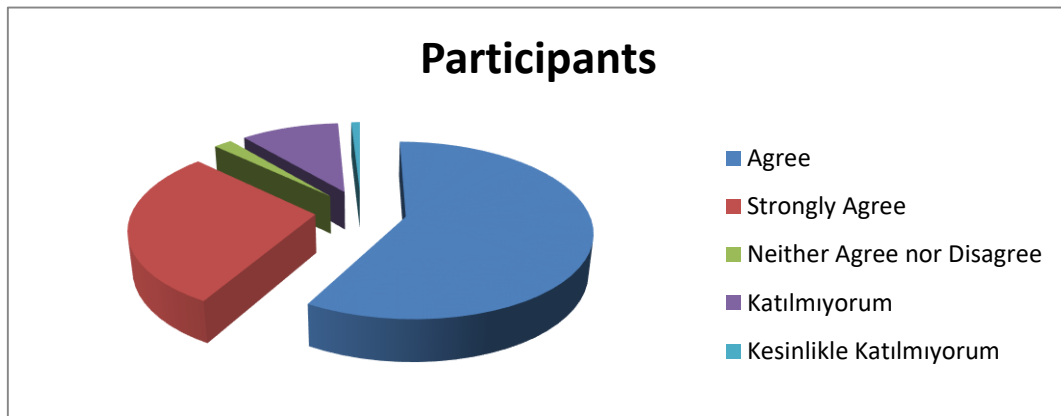


Graph 2. Answers to the 2nd Question

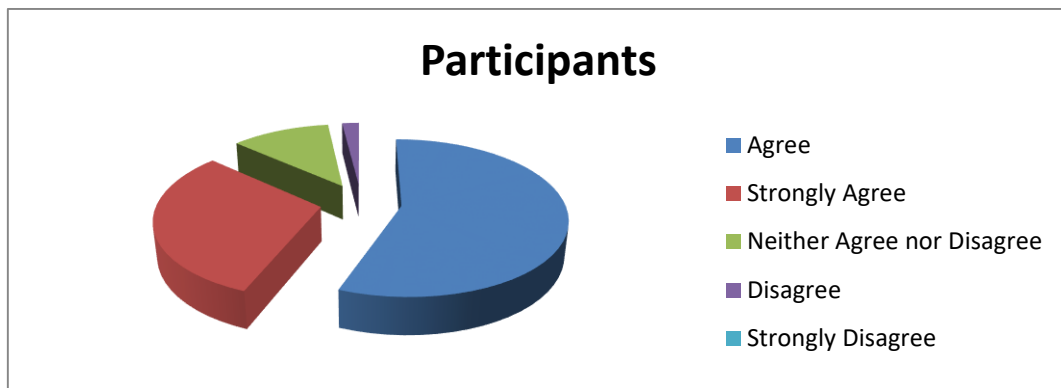


The first and second questions were asked to measure the level of benefitting from state support for the farmers. It has been observed that 26% and 27.9%, 14% and 25.1%, 20% and 27.9%, 25.1% and 12.2% and 14.9% and 14.9% of the participants gave the replies of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Accordingly, it has been observed that consistent replies were given for the level of benefitting from state support for the farmers. Although it has a similar distribution, when the answers for agricultural producers are examined, the rate of those finding state support insufficient is more compared to the other question.

Graph 3. Answers to the 3rd Question

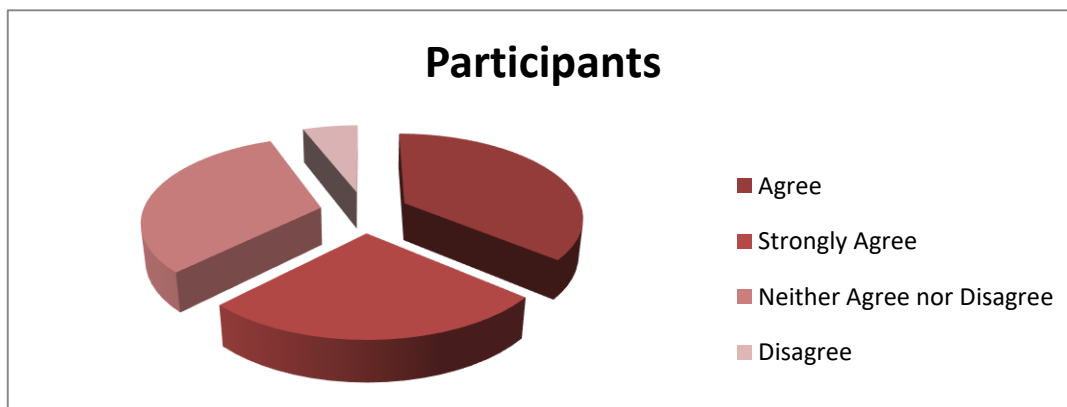


Graph 4. Answers to the 4th Question

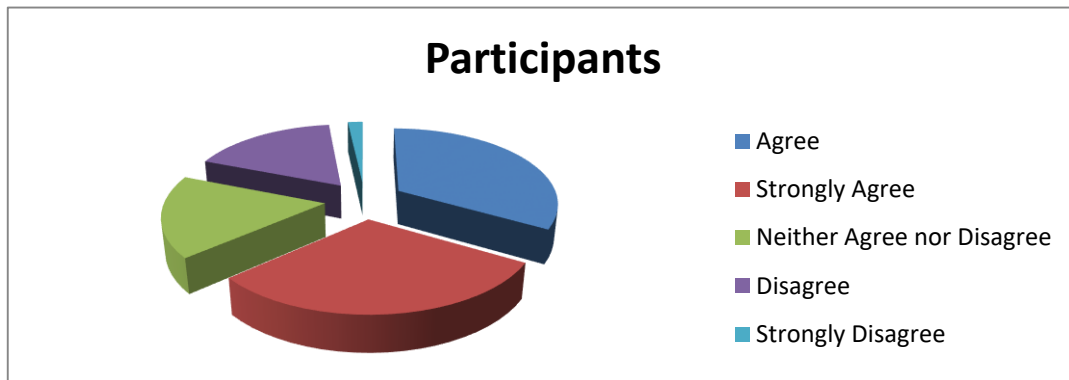


The third and fourth questions were asked to measure the level of knowledge of the farmers regarding agricultural cooperatives. 58.1% and 54.4%, 28.8% and 29.8%, 1.9% and 11.2%, 10.2% and 1.9% and 0.9% and 0% of the participants gave the replies of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Accordingly, more than half of the participants have knowledge about the concept and types of cooperatives. This data is significant to measure the level of knowledge of the farmers while examining the relation between the cooperatives and state from their perspective. Considering the replies given, it can be argued that the agricultural producers have a conscious attitude against such organizations.

Graph 5. Answers to the 5th Question

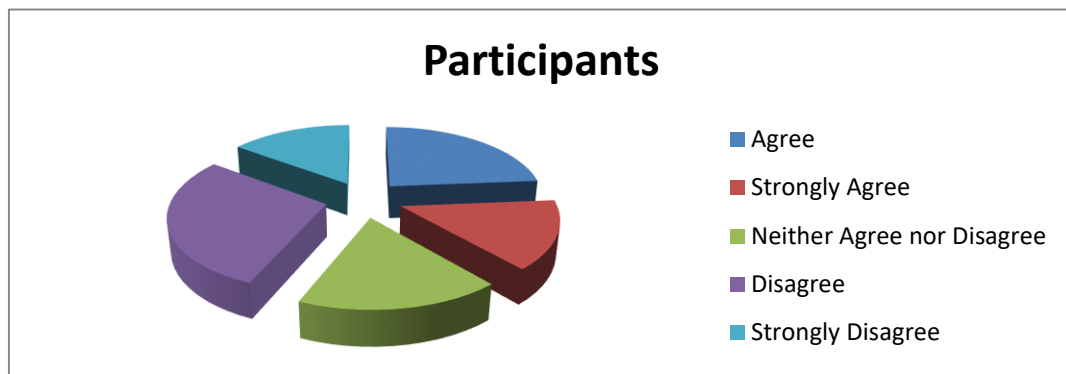


Graph 6. Answers to the 6th Question



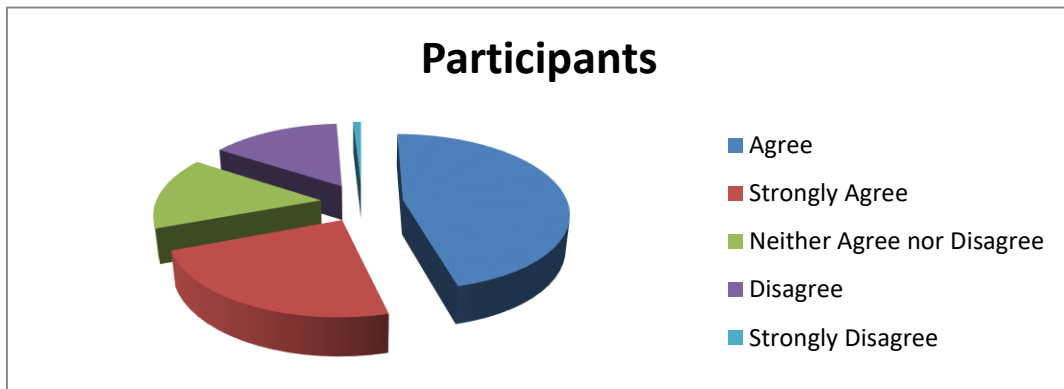
The fifth and sixth questions were asked to measure the level of knowledge of the farmers regarding public organization types of cooperatives. 34.4% and 35.8%, 25.1% and 32.6%, 30.2% and 18.6%, 5.6% and 18.6% and 3.7% and 1.9% of the participants gave the replies of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Accordingly, it shows that the farmers have an opinion on supreme unions and public organizations regarding cooperatives more frequently compared to other replies but it is not at the desired level yet. It can be argued considering the replies to the previous and these questions that the farmers have knowledge about basic concepts and types of cooperatives and do not have further knowledge about public organizations regarding the cooperative within the state and their corporate relations with the state.

Graph 7. Answers to the 7th Question



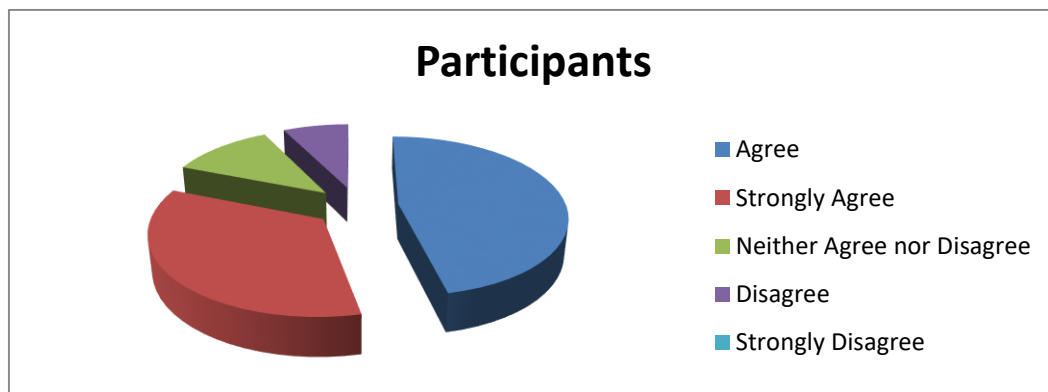
The seventh question was asked to assess the opinions of the farmers and cooperative shareholders on reflections of activities of the cooperatives in civil life especially in terms of the relations between the state and cooperatives. 23.7%, 14.9%, 17.7%, 28.8% and 14.9% of the participants gave the replies of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Accordingly, it can be claimed that the farmers, albeit at a limited rate, do not consider the cooperatives to have political motives. On the other hand, the rate of those considering them political is similar to those disagreeing with this suggestion. In this regard, one can tell that reflections of cooperatives in both public and civil life are interpreted differently by different groups. And this provides a significant data for assessment of public organizations regarding cooperatives and their potential of being affected by political agendas.

Graph 8. Answers to the 8th question



The eighth question was asked to assess the opinions of the farmers on bridge functioning of the cooperatives between the state support and farmers as an economic entity. 46%, 23%, 14.9%, 14.9% and 0.9% of the participants gave the replies of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Accordingly, the participants tend to believe that the cooperatives provide easiness to access to financial resources. And it indicates that cooperatives are intermediaries to transfer the supports economically within the frame of the relation between the state and cooperatives. In this context, it can be argued that farmers had a conscious attitude for assessment of economic dimensions of the cooperatives.

Graph 9. Answers to the 9th Question



The ninth question was asked to the farmers to make a general assessment at both individual and national level basing on the premise that the cooperative are economic organizations. 46.5%, 34.4%, 11.6%, 7.4% and 0% of the participants gave the replies of agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Accordingly, it is observed when examining the replies given to this question asked for a general assessment supporting the eight question that the farmers engaged in agricultural production mostly consider cooperatives as an economic necessity for both the country and farmers. In this context, it can be claimed that the cooperatives are organizations with significant economic value that are regarded as a necessity in public opinion.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The cooperatives have been significant organizations at both local and national level throughout the history. The cooperatives have not only provided benefits for their shareholders but also contributed in national economy and come to the forefront in national policies from time to time. The cooperatives have many functions and they enhance solidarity and cooperation in agriculture and thus led the way for a conscious organization. Examining the relations between the state and cooperatives, it is observed that economic support, training and incentives are the main topics of this relation. These are reflected in state policies, supported by public organizations and regulated by laws.

Considering this relations, we have tried to reflections of cooperatives in the state policies and from the perspective of farmers through the relations among the state, cooperatives and farmers and basing on the outputs of the scientific research project implemented in Thrace region. It has been observed by examining the data obtained from analysis of the research that favourable feedbacks were received from the farmers. It is possible to claim by considering the level of knowledge of the participants on the cooperative system, agricultural cooperatives are regarded as an intermediary to access to the state by the farmers with regards to their relations with the state and cooperatives. Furthermore, the cooperatives are taken into consideration in actual state policies by the laws enacted for the cooperatives and actions included in the agenda regarding agricultural cooperative system. The analyses yield multi-dimensional results. The state of agricultural cooperatives and farmers in civil life indicates that the farmers engaged in agricultural production are not totally unaware of the relation between the cooperatives and state. In this regard, increasing the role of cooperatives in the state policies will lead to a heightened awareness regarding the issue. Strengthening the relations between these organizations and farmers will lead to both ensuring sustainable development and bequeath a conscious organizational structure for the future generations. Thus, the agricultural cooperatives go beyond the local level and seem to be prominent actors for economic, social and political systems at national level. The cooperatives assume a role to establish connection with the state for the farmers, provide easiness to access to supports and incentives and seem to be an economic centrepiece instead of a political one. Therefore, the developments regarding cooperatives seem to be related to the concerns of the farmers in a manner going beyond a general national concern.

This study forms a local example showing reflections of the relations among the cooperatives, farmers and the state from perspectives of the farmers and the state. On the other hand, it has provided a local contribution in perspective of farmers on the reflection of agricultural cooperatives in state policies at local and national level. According to the results of this study; developing the cooperative organization on a grass-root basis, including farmers in state policies in order to protect them and raising awareness of the farmers on organization forms by state supports and incentives will heighten economic awareness and pave the way for popularization of cooperatives and increase in organization awareness. In this context, improving qualitative specialties such as legislation, training and supreme organization of the cooperatives in addition to quantitative specialties will strengthen the basis of these organizations and assist in creation of strong bonds.

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